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AUTHOR Martin, Barbara L.
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ABSTRACT

Designed for professionals who design and develop instructional materials, this paper identifies specific and general strategies that educational technologists can employ in their media productions to enhance aesthetic awareness. A brief overview of aesthetics and aesthetic education is provided, including definitions and various approaches to aesthetic education. The two most notable ways that educational technologists can influence aesthetics in learning situations are then discussed, i.e., the use of visuals and music. Finally, several general strategies for increasing aesthetic appreciation are presented that can be incorporated into any instructional program containing visual and audio components: (1) consistently set goals and objectives that incorporate aesthetics; (2) keep in mind the developmental level of learners and their previous experiences with aesthetics; (3) provide rich, varied, and extensive experiences with a number of art forms; (4) provide role models for students, either by being one, or by using the recognized "greats"; (5) provide opportunities to make and create presentations together with multiple opportunities for exposure to all different levels of quality productions; and (6) teach the techniques of a particular medium to learners who will be producers. Five strategies for using visual media and three for the use of music are also provided. A list of nine references is included. (JB)

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Instructional Media and Aesthetics

Barbara L. Martin

Kent State University

Association for Educational Communication and Technology

Las Vegas, Nevada

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INSTRUCTIONAL MEDIA AND AESTHETICS

Introduction

Educational technologists have long been interested in the role of visuals in learning and instruction. Research has demonstrated that the use of iconic symbols can greatly enhance an individual's understanding and grasp of concepts and ideas, can provide a concrete referent to make instruction more explicit, and can increase a learner's interest and motivation in a subject area. This use of visuals has been construed by some to mean that educational technologists and instructional media producers have therefore been interested in promoting the aesthetic education of learners (Clark, 1973). While it is plausible that the use of visuals may enhance aesthetic appreciation, it is by no means certain that the inclusion of visuals does so. In fact, it is the premise of this paper that visuals must be presented in specific ways to enhance aesthetic awareness, and that there are certain strategies that can be encorporated in any instructional media presentation toward this end. Additionally, the inclusion of music can also add substantially to a learner's aesthetic awareness/education. This paper will attempt to identify specific and general strategies that educational technologists can employ in their media productions to enhance aesthetic awareness.

Before beginning a discussion of aesthetic education, a

few words must be said about how educational technologists have traditionally approached the design of instructional materials. Coming from a learning theory background of behavioral psychology, and more recently information processing theory, educational technologists have generally followed a systems approach to the design of learning experiences. Behavioral objectives are written, operational descriptions of end products are specified, objectives are broken down into small manageable steps, activities and media are designed very carefully to ensure that learners receive instruction directly related to the objectives, and measurement devices are developed to reflect the behaviors stated in the objectives. This approach has proved fruitful and worthwhile. Research has demonstrated that media can be designed, developed, and produced to facilitate learning and that the use of all varieties of media can make the instructional process more effective and more efficient (See Clark, 1983, for a review of the influence of media on learning).

The incorporation of media in all types of learning situations is here to stay. Slides, video, computers, film, transparencies, etc. are used with some regularity in most classrooms, in both school and non-school settings. What this means, of course, is that educational technologists, whether they are the designers, developers, or producers of educational media can and do have tremendous influence on the

development of all learners. As people in the field move more and more often into business and industry settings, health care settings, and other non-school locations, our influence is increasingly widened. We therefore, as a field, can have an impact on many learners by the types of experiences we provide for them in our productions and presentations. I would like to propose that while we do not have to become aesthetic educators, per se, we can add another dimension to instructional media by using strategies to enhance aesthetics without losing the strides we have already made in producing visual and audio media that assists learners in reaching cognitive, psychomotor, and affective goals. The aesthetic dimension need not and will not be approached in the same way that educational technologists have approached the design of instruction for specific goals and objectives; rather specific objectives will not be addressed. The intent is not to teach aesthetics, but rather to provide aesthetic experiences.

The literature in aesthetics is rich and diverse. Aesthetics is a branch of philosophy that deals with art, however, psychologists, educators, theologians, and a host of others have written about aesthetics. In the section that follows, I will give a very brief overview of aesthetics and aesthetic education, including definitions and approaches to aesthetic education. In the third section of the paper, I will discuss the two most notable ways that

educational technogists have for influencing aesthetics in learning situations, i.e., with the use of visuals and music. In the final section of the paper, I will list several strategies to enhance aesthetic appreciation that can be incorporated into any instructional program that uses visual and audio.

Aesthetic Education

The concepts of aesthetics and art are so often closely linked that the two are sometimes assumed to be synonymous. Aesthetics is the branch of philosophy that deals with the philosophy of art, however, aesthetics is a broader, more general term than art; aesthetics is concerned with feelings and sensory experiences. Eisner (1982) states that aesthetics is distinct from art in that art generally implies making something. Aesthetics, on the other hand, is related to "the experience secured from things already made. ...'aesthetic' is more closely associated with the experience or appreciation of such form" (p. 87). Aesthetics, then, is concerned with emotions and feelings that arise from the experience of interacting with art forms, and is often sensory in nature.

Just as aesthetics has been closely aligned with the study of art, so has aesthetic education been closely associated with art education. Music education, dance education, and theatre education are sometimes linked to aesthetic education, but art education and aesthetic

education are at times indistinguishable from one another. Eisner (1982), however, says that aesthetic education is not a field but rather is an area of study; it is of interest to a somewhat limited group of educators who share similiar ideas and who come from a variety of fields.

Conceptions of Aesthetic Education

DeGarmo (1913) suggests that the major purpose of aesthetic education is to assist learners develop the ability to judge whether or not something is beautiful. He states that one of the goals of aesthetic education is to raise the standards of taste among students so that people can learn to produce or promote the beautiful in all aspects of daily life: in furniture arranging, in cooking, in gardening, in hanging pictures, etc. "The psychological purpose of aesthetic education, therefore, is to promote the pure, unselfish joy of life, to enable us to see and appreciate the beautiful wherever it exists, and when possible to produce it where it is not, but should be" (p.4).

Eisner (1982) give three conceptions of aesthetic education that are different from that expressed by DeGarmo. The first conception relates directly to the teaching of fine arts; that is, students must become literate in the individual art forms, e.g., art, music, dance. The aesthetically educated individual is the one who is "most" literate in the greatest number of forms. The implication for designing curricular and instructional programs is that

individual art forms should be taught separately since each one has its own special characteristics and distinctions.

The second conception is that all art forms share similarities and differences and that these commonalities are of utmost importance. An integrated curriculum would be desirable given this view of aesthetic education because the differences and similarities in the various forms can be explored. Each art form is studied in relation to the others to determine how each conveys meaning and feeling.

The third conception of aesthetic education states that all subject areas have the potential for aesthetic education. The goal of such a curriculum is to produce artists, not in the traditional sense of the fine arts (e.g., painters, musicians, etc.), but "artists of ideas." In this view, all subject areas can be studied to determine the extent to which the inherent ideas are well made and created. "To the extent to which these forms are well made, they have aesthetic properties. The major aim of education is to help students acquire the skills necessary for the creation of such forms--and of course the inclination to do so" (Eisner, 1982, p.88). These forms can be found in mathematics, geography, history, vocational fields, and all others. This view was proposed by Read and is poorly understood and rarely practiced in schools (Eisner, 1982).

Still another conception of aesthetic education has been advanced by Polanyi (Bowman, 1982). Polanyi believes that

all knowing is based on personal experience and beliefs, and is derived from a personal interpretative framework. This interpretive framework is the "lens" through which we understand and define our world. We, therefore, cannot know our world through objective means only; what we know we know tacitly. Bowman (1982) gives this example, ". . .further evidence of our tacit power derives from the ability to discern multiple and sometimes divergent meanings in a single, unchanging entity. . . . Works of great art of course provide the most compelling evidence of this truth, revealing as they do almost limitless diversity of meaning" (p. 78).

Regarding art, aesthetics, and cognition, Polanyi believes that all cognitive activity ultimately depends on intuitive feelings of "fit or coherence," and that an asethetic experience is essentially one of surrendering oneself to a work of art (Bowman, 1982). The art form or object provides the learner with a center for the expression or realization of emotions, feelings, and ideas. Hence, Polanyi's conception of aesthetics is oriented around the self and the expressiveness of each individual as s/he approaches an art form. All understanding is therefore personal and personally meaningful.

This brief overview of five conceptions of aesthetic education can serve as the basis for the role of instructional media in learning situations. The extent to

which educational technologists can use these views of aesthetic education in the design and production of media may have a significant impact on learners beyond the impact they are already having. For example, simply incorporating great art forms and music in productions may pique learner's sensibilities and have an impact on them that we cannot and perhaps need not measure.

In the next section we will begin to explore what instructional technologists can do to influence the aesthectic appreciation of their audiences, and also what professors of educational technology could or should be teaching students who will eventually be designers and producers of instructional media.

Audiences and Artists

An individual can participate in four different roles in the artistic or aesthetic process: the artist or producer role, the audience member role, the critic role, and the performer role (Gardner, 1973). Briefly, the four roles can be described in the following ways:

1. The artist is the creator of a work of art. This individual has gained sufficient background and expertise in a particular medium and has developed the necessary creative skills to enable him/her to produce an art form. The work of art that the artist produces must communicate and the message the artists desires to communicate is an intentional one.

2. The audience member is the individual to whom the art form is directed. Gardner (1973) states that the audience must undergo an affective change to be qualified as an audience member; s/he must "read" or understand the communicated message and must be moved in some way; the individual's emotions and feelings must come into play to be considered an audience member.

3. The critic evaluates and reacts to works of art. The critic's role is to communicate to others his or her perceptions of the work from a knowledge base. Hence, the critic is an expert in a particular form or forms, and brings this knowldege as well as his or her subjective reactions of the work to an audience.

4. The performer is the individual who interprets and transmits a work of art to others. In some art forms the artist and performer are one in the same; in other forms, such as an orchestra, the performer(s) translates the artist's ideas and presents them to an audience. The performer must be an expert in the art form so that s/he can accurately communicate the form to others; however, the performer might also bring his or her subjective reactions of the form to the audience.

These roles are not always distinct; for example, the critic is also an audience member, and an artist is often times also a performer. For the purposes of this paper, however, I will focus on only two of the roles, artist and

audience, and I will approach them as separate entities.

The Audience

In the discussion that follows, the audience will refer to two different groups, one a subset of the other. The first groups is the general audience, that is, any consumer of instructional media. It can include students in elementary or seconday schools, university students, learners in non-school settings, teachers in staff development workshops, etc. The second group is a specialized audience, students who will eventually become "artists" of instructional media. This is the group of learners who are studying to be designers and/or producers of instructional media; they will be the instructional designers, the video producers, the photographers, and the developers of instructional slide shows and multimedia presentations. Although this specialized group will be discussed in more detail in the next section of this paper, each preparing "artist" is also an audience member while s/he is a student. Instructors and professors of educational technology should be especially sensitive to this group as they design their own instruction if they are interested in promoting aesthetic awareness. Some of the strategies that can be used to develop aesthetic appreciation are the same for both the general audience and this special group, but it is worth remembering that this special audience will perhaps become producers, and their aesthetic development is of considerable importance.

How does an audience member develop aesthetic awareness? The most important and influential strategy, proposed by many, is that the audience member must experience art forms and must experience an emotion or a feeling state from them. The perceptual system of the audience must be engaged and activated, and feelings must be aroused (Gardner, 1973). Bowman (1982), in his discussion of Polanyi, supports this idea of learner involvement and experiential learning. Aesthetic learning should be intuitive, should promote involvement with the art form, and should encompass a wide diversity of examples and opportunities for experiences with a particular art form or with several.

Both Gardner and Bowman suggest that analysis of the art form may add dimension and depth to understanding, but that it is the perceiving system that is of ultimate interest when developing the aesthetic appreciation of an audience. To more fully understand and to get maximum benefit from exposure to art forms, a knowledge of technical skills and the ability to perceive subtlies in various forms may be helpful, but may also hinder rather than help. Learners may become so bogged down in the analysis phase that they may fail to attend to the way the art form feels (Bowman, 1973).

Edelfeld (1979) concurs with this latter view. In discussing music, he quotes Sessions (1950), "Technique is certainly useful, not to say indispensible, to the composer or the performer; . . . But theory, in the sense of

generalization, is not of the least use to the listener; in practice it is a veritable encumbrance if he allows preoccupation with it to interfere with his contact with the music as such. . . . but he will only be misled if he is persuaded to listen in an exploratory rather than a completely receptive spirit (Edelfelt, 1979, p. 137). Edelfelt goes on to say that this receptive spirit is not to be construed as passivity; the audience member must be participating, doing, constructing, in essence, creating his or her own experience.

A major goal, then, is to heighten feelings and emotions through continued exposure to well developed art forms. The audience member needs rich and diverse experiences with art forms that can promote emotional and feeling responses. These can include exposure to great works of art and music, literature and poetry, the natural world and, mechanical objects that are well designed and "beautiful." Gardner (1973) even suggests that an enriched life leads to aesthetic development. These experiences can be included in photography, slide shows, film, video productions, through interactive video, etc.

The Artists

In educational technology, the artists are the producers of instructional media. They are the ones who design, develop, and produce the products to which the audience is exposed. What is their role in producing aesthetic

experiences for audiences?

First, they have previously been audience members in learning situations themselves and hopefully have chosen to continue to expose themselves to aesthetic experiences. This includes exposure to both formal works of art, e. g., painting and sculpture produced by great artist, and performances of music, theater, and dance, as well as to examples of the form(s) they themselves will produce.

Second, the artist must be able to communicate in his or her chosen form, e. g., slides, multimedia systems, computer software, video. This requires the technical skills to take full advantage of the medium so that it will involve the audience in sensory and feeling experiences. The artist must be able to manipulate his/her medium and develop a style that becomes one's own. In order to do so, the artist must become so familiar with the medium of choice that s/he not only understands and recognizes the traditions of the medium, but is able to go beyond them and produce something new (Gardner, 1973). In this role the artist has also become a critic and can evaluate and the worth of productions in his/her own medium, and can recommend modifications and improvements.

Third, the artist needs guidance and assistance in developing his/her expertise. Instructors must model the behaviors they desire from their learners either by producing their own aesthetic productions or at the very least exposing learners to aesthetic experiences. Guidance often takes the

form of formal teaching about aesthetic forms. For example, some key attributes of aesthetic art forms have been described by various authors. Child (1964) lists seven principles of aesthetic values that can be used to evaluate different works: selectivity, organization, consistency, variety, aliveness, use of decoration, and appropriate use of elements. In a study, Child and his associates found that by understanding these principles children could be taught to discriminate the relative value of works of arts in much the same way that experts/critics do. If these principles form the core of art forms judged by experts to be "best", then it would behoove professors of instructional media designers and producers to instruct students either formally or informally in the use of these principles.

DeGarmo (1913) discussed some of these same principles plus others in the development of artists. He discusses the uses of color and the combinations to be made from colors. Color, he says, has the special ability to arouse the emotions and, therefore, is one of the premier aspects of aesthetic appeal. The use of color in all productions, as well as recognition of color in nature and in all aspects of life, is of utmost importance to the developing artist. It should be taught and its effects explored.

Other components of aesthetics or formal beauty discussed by DeGarmo (1913) are: 1) mathematical proportion, 2) dynamic (rather than static) force, 3) use of decoration,

4) vitality, 5) unity of form and content, 6) attention to the typical, 7) symmetry and balance, and 8) harmony. Regarding mathematical proportion, he says, "This category enables us to know how and where to look for beauty in a multitude of things now regarded as of inferior aesthetic worth, or as having no aesthetic value at all. . . . beauty that arises from proportion in connection with the idea of function is far too important to be overlooked" (p.72). By learning to look at the proportions of everyday objects such as guns, locomotives, and machines and tools of all types, we can enhance our aesthetic appreciation of the world. This view goes hand in hand with his discussion of another component, the typical, as an element of aesthetic appreciation. The typical is not only found in nature but is also found in man-made objects. The artist who is sensitive to proportion, the typical, and the beauty found in nature can do much to enhance the asethetic awareness and appreciation of the audiences to whom s/he communicates if these elements are included in his/her productions. This view is much like that proposed by Read (1958).

Finally, the artist also needs to create and construct art forms. In doing so, s/he can arrange elements, rearrange them, compare and contrast effects, and determine his or her own emotional involvement and aesthetic reaction to his/her production. This should greatly aid the artist in determining the possible effects a production will have on

an audience.

Although this is by no means an exhaustive list, educational technology professors and instructors can do the following to aid media producers/artists develop materials that capatilize on the aesthetic domain: 1) provide aesthetic experiences, 2) serve as a role model by producing their own aesthetic materials and/or exposing learners to aesthetic media productions, 3) formally or informally teach the technical techniques of a particular medium, 4) formally or informally teach basic design principles, including the aesthetic properties of mathetical proportion, 5) heighten student's awareness of the richness of nature and the beauty of the typical, and 6) provide opportunities for producers to create media productions, to critique them, and evaluate their objective and subjective qualities.

In the final section of this paper, a list of strategies is given that educational media producers can incorporate in media productions to enhance the aesthetic aspects of any production. Only the use of visuals and music will be addressed.

Instructional Strategies for Enhancing Aesthetic Awareness Through Media

The five conceptions of aesthetic education presented earlier suggested different ways that curricular and instructional programs could or should be developed to enhance aesthetic awareness. These include: 1) assisting

learners in developing their awareness and judgment of beauty, 2) teaching each of the fine arts as distinct entities, 3) teaching the simiarities and differences in various arts forms, 4) using all subject areas and the ideas in each as the basis of aesthetic education, and 5) the personal, experiential approach proposed by Polanyi. These five conceptions will serve as the basis for the strategies proposed.

Clark (1973) states that "The roots of aesthetic experience are in visual experience" (p. 97). The close association of art and aesthetic education confirms this, however, music, dance, and theater education also have strong aesthetic components, as do all subject areas and everyday experiences and objects if one agrees with Read (1958) and DeGarmo (1913). Since instructional media are primarily visual and auditory, these two forms will serve as the basis for this discussion with visuals receiving the lion's share of space.

The following is a list of strategies that instructional media producers can use to enhance the aesthetic development of all audiences and of media producers/artists.

General Strategies

1. Consistently set goals and objectives that incorporate the aesthetic domain. Therefore, along with the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor objectives, instructors should keep the aesthetic realm in mind and consciously

attempt to design materials that will influence the aesthetic development of learners.

2. Keep in mind the developmental level of learners and their previous experience with aesthetics. Children are sometimes more receptive to aesthetic experiences than are adults because they allow themselves to be imaginative, to play, to create, to expore, and to express their emotions. Adults, through continued exposure, can also be oriented to be more receptive to the aesthetic domain.

3. Provide rich, varied, and extensive experiences with a number of art forms. Where possible, use the works of the great masters or performers to teach a subject matter rather than using uninteresting or poorly designed visuals.

4. Provide role models for students either by being one or by using the "recognized" greats. Also model appropriate uses of aesthetic materials in your own learning environment.

5. For future media producers, provide opportunities to make and create presentations using the desired medium, and provide multiple opportunites for exposure to all different levels of quality productions that incorporate or fail to incorporate aesthetics. Students can then learn to evaluate, critique, and produce the higher quality forms.

6. Teach the techniques of a particular medium to learners who will be producers. Also teach general principles of aesthetics.

Using Visual Media

1. Strive to include visuals that invoke and serve as a catalyst for emotional and feeling responses. Also use discrepant or dissonant visuals to promote interest and enjoyment.

2. Use great works of art whenever possible to illustrate ideas and concepts and to enhance aesthetic development.

3. Use visual sequences that incorporate nature and the environment, e.g., sunsets, landscapes, etc.

4. Use everyday/typical objects in photographs, slides, and video sequences to teach cognitive materials. Ensure that the technical qualities of the medium used are excellent and that the everyday objects are portrayed in a pleasing light.

5. Make the best use of color and use it often. Even when color is not essential for cognitive understanding, use it to enhance aesthetic appreciation.

The Use of Music

1. Use classical music as background music for media productions, or to set a particular mood to a production.

2. Provide opportunites for students to determine the effects of putting different visuals with different musical scores. Discuss how the music enhances or distracts from the visual aspects of a production, how it arouses or fails to arouse emotion, and how it assists in making a statement.

Some popular television shows, e. g., Miami Vice, and MTV may be of use.

3. Use sounds from nature, for example, the sound of a waterfall or the roar of the ocean, if approriate.

Concluding Thoughts

To educate means literally "to bring out of" or "to lead forth." Therefore when we educate we do not necessarily have to "pour learning in" students; what we may have to do is to draw out of students what is already there. In viewing education in this way, we need not write specific behavioral objectives for each and every learning experience, nor do we need to know the precise outcome of every learning experience. Rather what we can do is to arrange experiences for students that we hope will influence them in positive, although perhaps unstated, ways. What is likely is that such experiences will influence and impact upon different learners in highly diverse ways.

Designing and producing instructional media to promote and develop the aesthetic awareness and appreciation of learners falls squarely into this category of planning for unstated and unobservable outcomes (although outcomes could be both stated and observed). The position taken here is that educational technologists have the opportunity to influence aesthetic development by what they include in their creations and productions. Some strategies have been suggested and some ideas for enhancing development have been

provided. Inclusion of one or of several stategies may have positive influences on learners; they certainly could not hurt. The key to promoting aesthetic developement seems to be to provide aesthetic experiences to learners and to let them have the opportunity to engage their emotions and feelings from such experiences. Use of art works and music are preferred ways of aesthetic enhancing development.

Educational technologists can play a prominent role in designing and producing instructional media that engages students in aesthetic experiences. Because of the range of subject matter that instructional media covers, our influence can be significant. It is an opportunity our field should not take lightly, nor should we dismiss the potential of our impact.

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